
INTERVENING IN COLLECTIVITIES USING PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTATION

Queralt Prat-i-Pubill^a & Josep Maria Lozano^b

Abstract: Prior research claims that argumentative persuasion, or meaning-making, can be used to successfully intervene in organizational settings. However, it is not clear how persuasive narratives affect individuals and how meaning-making is operationalized. The present study uses linguistics and ethology research to explain how meaning is created and structured. These are alternative disciplines to the rhetoric, narrative and storytelling currently utilized in management. We explain how to reach human sensibility and how, therefore, to transform the original enquiry on focus on superficial argumentative persuasion to a focus on immanent structures of persuasion that are related to axiological choices. This shifted focus allows for the creation of potent narratives which are able to intervene in collectivities.

Keywords: *Narrative, Intervention, Sensibility, Value, Persuasion, Rhetoric.*

^a Professor and researcher at the Institute for Social Innovation at ESADE and member of the research team of CETR.

^b Professor in the Department of Social Sciences at ESADE, and senior researcher in CSR at the Institute for Social Innovation. He also forms part of the academic team of the Chair in Leaderships and Democratic Governance.

Follet famously claimed that management is “the art of getting things done through people”. This definition encompasses many different ways to “get things done”: for example, the art of controlling and giving adequate orders to employees, so that they obey. Or, the art of developing a wide array of motivational incentives, whether financial or otherwise, which may make employees more “inclined” to respond to management directives. The underlying assumption of the above approaches is that managers, leaders or executives know what is to be done. However, approaching Follet’s sentence from a different angle and taking into account the volatile, fast paced and structurally changing business competitive conditions which presently exist, we presume that managers could get things done through people, without actually specifying the things or people involved. Managers could persuade organizational members towards interesting orientations and purposes that somehow direct their creative interests. More than ever, managers are aware that their teams, groups, organizations, as well as they themselves, need to be creative in the answers they give to newly arising everyday business issues (IBM, 2010).

However, promoting individual creativity, i.e. the ability to create new and valuable ideas (Amabile, 1997), is not enough in today’s organizations, because complexity is so acute that individuals hold very specialized and partial views of their organizational responsibilities. Furthermore, incentivising individual creativity would not be sufficient in maintaining the fiction of the entity known as the “organization”, and therefore another element, cooperation, is needed in uniting the different parts and individuals towards a common purpose. Traditionally, the ability to develop such cooperation in organizations has been leaders’ or managers’ responsibility. Furthermore, this meaning-making, or purpose or orientation capabilities, has been defined as central (Barnard, 1938). However, despite relating cooperation to meaning-making, it is true that, in theory at least, cooperation and creativity could be incentivised by using any of, or a combination of, other classic managerial intervention methods geared towards changing the characteristics of individuals or altering their relationships, for example, coercion, environmental manipulations, psychic manipulations and facilitation (Kelman, 1978). Thus considering the different intervention options and taking into account the need to incentivise creativity and cooperation development we chose to focus on intervening in collectivities using persuasive argumentation, which has been amply researched by diverse disciplines in management.

Moreover, the use of persuasive argumentation seems more in tune with the underlying objective of promoting attitudes of creativity and cooperation, allowing the personal development of individuals' motivation to be sparked and sustained over the long term. Nevertheless, it has been claimed that research on motivating others through this meaning-making ability has been gradually losing importance in scholarly research due to the difficulty in operationalizing meaning and purpose (Podolny et al., 2005). Despite this negative claim, the disciplines of storytelling, narratives and rhetoric have generated research with regard to how to create meaning, and managers and scholars have used their findings in management settings with diverse results. Our approach to how meaning is created is based on the disciplines of linguistics and ethology research, that have not yet been fully considered in management. Our interdisciplinary research allows us to propose different starting assumptions of how meaning is created and to operationalize meaning creation. We can also explain the process of meaning-making in its most basic form and describe how our senses and sensibilities are affected. As a result, we move the research focus from persuasion to the immanent levels of language and operationalize meaning-making so that it may intervene in collectivities.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTATION IN MANAGEMENT: APPROACHES FROM RHETORIC, NARRATOLOGY AND STORYTELLING

Humanity has a long tradition of using narratives and stories to transmit knowledge orally and to motivate collectivities towards desired purposes. Myths, communicated through the development of stories, were understood as factual and axiological descriptions and understandings of the world that provided a totalizing comprehension, able to create, and thus provide, meaning which was able to orient collectivities towards effective action for survival (Lévi-Strauss, 1979; Schilbrack 2002). There has been ample research on the use of stories for educational purposes aimed at transforming the attitudes and actions of the recipients (Zaro and Salaberri, 1995; Bage, 1999; Fireman et al., 2003; Davies, 2004; McDrury and Alterio, 2004; Lacher et al., 2005; Fox Eades, 2006; Fireman, 2007; Davies, 2007; Parkinson, 2009; Cajete et al., 2010; Parkinson, 2011). This long tradition of meaning-making has in turn inspired management practitioners and scholars to take advantage of the possibilities

of educating employees, intervening in their attitudes and relationships, for specific collective organizational purposes.

We have analysed prior management research on how narratives, stories and other types of discursive means are used to shape employees' attitudes or their relationships. Our analysis is geared towards understanding how the claim of meaning-making can be substantiated as a management tool. We have avoided sticking with or choosing a single definition of what represents persuasive argumentation, and accordingly we have instead accepted different approaches and assumptions that define different disciplines focused on meaning-making. Therefore, we have analysed any type of communication, whether or not it is organized under the scheme of a narration, a tale, a story or discursive argumentation which has been claimed to have the ability to create meaning. We are not presently interested in, for example, how to use narratives to understand organizations (Boje, 2001; Czarniawska, 1998; Czarniawska, 2004; Gabriel 2004), or how narratives can be used by organizations to brand products (Vincent, 2002; Fog 2010), or be of use in "selling oneself" in job seeking (Hansen, 2009). Neither is the present study interested in researching the contextualized elements required for meaning-making to come about. A practice oriented approach is taken, and we study whether claims that persuasive argumentation can create meaning have been fulfilled or not.

We cluster current meaning-making research from rhetoric, narratology or storytelling into three groups. First, those that claim or explain how to create meaning by using words, second, those against this claim, and a third group that tries to reconcile both positions. In the first group, some scholars, coaches and managers argue that certain types of stories have a direct motivational impact, because these stories transform the attitudes and actions of the recipients. They explain how to create potent narratives that are appealing, create meaning, and are able to achieve organizations' purposes (Gargiulo, 2005; Norrick, 2010; Spaulding 2011); others explain good narratives by way of concrete, real examples (Adorisio 2009), and finally, some give recommendations and offer a wealth of stories and narratives to be used for diverse required interventions (Denning, 2004; Denning, 2005; Brown, 2005; Gargiulo, 2007; Brill, 2008; Quesenbery, 2010). However, despite these suggestions, it is not clear what the qualities and characteristics of meaning making actually are. Neither is it clear how could it be operationalized, and the advice is foggy and therefore can easily be misinterpreted and misused.

The second group of scholars argues that research and practical managerial suggestions into meaning-making is not only vague but is actually harmful to organizations' and leaders' effectiveness (Boje, 2006). Despite understanding the potential of persuasive narratives, these scholars acknowledge that management interventions using meaning-making and persuasive argumentation are not being successful as could be expected or claimed (Ford et al., 2002; Boje, 2006; Scheeres and Rhodes, 2006; Diefenbach, 2007). Thus, this group proposes a reality check on what they see as the generalized and unsubstantiated claims by the first group of fervent promoters of meaning-making persuasion with words. Then, the third group mentioned above weighs both sides of the argument and argues that narratives and "something else" can actually change the attitudes of the employees towards the desired motivational outcomes, and therefore effectively create meaning. This "something else" is a specific element for every scholar. For example, Schein (2009) claims that narratives organized around educational processes might have an impact through influencing employees' motivations. However, the use of narratives to communicate knowledge in organizational settings has also been shown to be problematic, due to its fuzzy nature (Geiger and Schreyögg, 2012).

Continuing with this third group, Can-Seng (2002) argues that managing audiences' emotions is key in meaning creation endeavours. Sheeres and Rhodes (2006) and Diefenbach (2007) say it is not possible to create meaning when the current underlying organizational values are either suppressed or avoided. This is the case because new valuable purposes are *de facto* imposed, and thus persuasion is not really being used. These authors therefore advise against the "aggressive" use of words and censuring of identities. Jackson and Esse (2006) argue for a need to create management structures which favour communication and discussion enabling meaning-making to take place. Pounsford (2007) claims that a combination of coaching and storytelling means that engagement can occur and the intervention can be effective. For Brunninge (2009), the instrumentalization of historical company accounts can help to legitimize new courses of action and it is therefore a powerful method of creating meaning. Briody et al. (2012) develop a set of management tools geared towards sustaining communicative efforts and achieving the desired intervention effects; in their case, a culture of collaboration. Finally, Mouton et al. (2012) affirm that in order for meaning-making to be successful, it has to be sustained by organizational mechanisms.

There are five key elements which explain the current problematic findings on meaning-making in management; all these findings are inter-related and are different facets of the issue under study. They are, first, a focus on individuals as meaning-making entities; second, overlooking the existing underlying conditions for meaning-making; third, an exclusive focus on the superficially manifested persuasive structures of meaning-making; fourth, a focus on meaning-making as a rational process that can be rationally interpreted; and fifth and last, the impossibility of operationalizing meaning-making.

First, the disciplines of rhetoric, narrative (narratology), and storytelling, assume that meaning-making is an individual affair in its most radical understanding. Individuals are responsible for their own meaning-making, because they are assumed not only to be autonomous, but autarchic in this matter. Management approaches are geared to persuade individuals that certain ways of acting and behaving are more valuable than others, preferably appealing to their morals. The opposite view to this assumption is that meaning-making is a group endeavour, and that the intervention should therefore be group based. However, this is not our assumption either, as we are approaching meaning-making from a different starting assumption, by arguing that individuals are constituted and structured by language. In fact, meaning is always present as an immediate datum (Greimas, 1975; Greimas 1981); this is so, because human relationships with the world are always formed through signs and symbols, as linguistic access. Therefore, the approach we propose is that of an autonomous symbiotic being, because his/her access to reality is linguistic and thus, by definition, symbiotic. "Access" to objects and by extension to reality passes through the meanings of the words that represent the objects and reality, and therefore we collectively define what is valuable. The logical conclusion of this assumption is that for valuable motivations to be appealing and thus effective, they have to be oriented not only to individuals but also to collective survival. The second conclusion from this assumption is that meaning-making is presented to each one of us following an automatic process of development much like language is learned; therefore we are not "responsible" for it, as any child inherently possesses a linguistic program that allows him or her to learn any language (Chomsky, 2000), and in a similar way, valuable project orientations are learned as part of our human development and as part of what it means to be human.

Second, if individuals are constituted and structured by language then there are already valuable motivations in place that provide this auto-

matic meaning. Obviously, the point of the intervention is that these “already in place” values systems are not considered adequate by organizations, though this issue is not detected because the values systems are left unquestioned and therefore become invisible. Currently, organizational intervention is geared towards transforming individuals who are considered deficient in their organizational attitudes and relationships. It is something of a paradox that individuals are considered deficient but at the same time are assumed to be self-sufficient, or “autarchic”, in developing their lives. Sometimes the existence of systems of values is acknowledged (Sheres and Rhodes, 2006; Diefenbach, 2007; Jabri, 2008) however this is rare. Management studies have examined the different possible conceptions of what an organization can be like, and how individuals and their relationships in the organizational setting are thought to be (Morgan, 2006). If managers or leaders do not perform an initial inquiry into the current conceptions and purposes of the organization then it is clear that any meaning-making intervention is being done at a secondary level or as a sub-purpose of assumed and thus invisible valuable purposes. The existence and importance of these systems of values has been amply studied, and ethology research shows that the process of retarded development, neoteny, is an evolutionary trait and it is connected to our ability to transmit valuable orientations through our culture (Lorenz, 1981). For example, it has been shown in a prior study that the human brain does not reach full development until approximately 23 years of age, and humans are therefore open to developing new interpretations of the world given by culture (Morris, 1967). This evolutionary-cultural process has permitted human beings to become super-predators on earth (Morris, 1967). Because we are minimally genetically determined and culturally flexible, we have become very adaptable by leaving key orientations on how to behave open to education (Corbi, 1983). Therefore, we are a unique species, in that our evolution is not only genetic, like all others, but is also culturally flexible.

Third, if the underlying meaning-making structures are not considered, then all approaches to intervention are made at the manifested level of argumentation. Therefore all proposed meaning-making findings are at a secondary level of importance in meaning-making. Summarising, these disciplines of rhetoric, narratives and storytelling concentrate on the manifested persuasive argumentation of what is being said, how it is being said, and what effect saying it will have, exclusively at the superficial level of meaning-making, disregarding the basic constitutive and struc-

tural foundations of meaning-making. It is therefore difficult to show that their approaches are able to create meaning and intervene in human beings' characteristics and their relationships.

Fourth, although these disciplines rationally justify meaning-making, this does not mean that reason is the quality that it is required for meaning-making to happen. This is important, because although stories justify their existence in management as a more compelling way to transmit information or knowledge and rhetoric must always justify that being persuasive is an adequate mixture of ethos, logos and pathos, somehow it is assumed that if a story or a narrative is rationally created then the audience will get the intended message. The conundrum in these meaning-making proposals is that for us, meaning-making does not mean "understanding" morals or consequences, or being compelled in a certain way by being affected emotionally. For us, meaning-making means to be constituted and structured by it, therefore it must reach our sensibility and guide our attitudes and relationships. Therefore, meaning-making is a qualitative understanding.

Finally, operationalization is an important issue to consider. It has been claimed that meaning-making has lost relevance because it has not been operationalized (Podolny et al, 2005). This is not surprising, operationalization is a central element in quantitative research methods and disciplines that investigate meaning-making use interpretative methods. Qualitative research methods richly assess the subject of analysis much more effectively than any quantitative de-contextualized method, but qualitative methods are not focused in replication or generalization of findings and thus operationalization is not an issue to be considered. Therefore, these disciplines have not been able to operationalize how meaning is constructed and thus they have not provided the means for managers to create and develop successful persuasive argumentation.

Therefore, we have shifted our interest from superficial to deeper structures of meaning-making, and accordingly moved from focusing on persuasive narratives to understanding how valuable projects intervene in individuals' attitudes and thus how persuasive argumentation can be truly developed. Consequently, we aim at understanding the axiological choices that have been taken at a collective level that affect meaning-making at its deeper level. As a result, any organizational intervention will have to design appropriate axiological projects (valuable collective orientations) that can constitute and structure the individual from its

deeper level of meaning-making, hence these valuable collective orientations have to directly affect organizational members' sensibilities.

The following part of this paper shows how to operationalize meaning-making by creating valuable orientations that can affect human beings' sensibilities. Once sensibility is affected, our characteristics and relationships can be transformed, and the required organizational intervention can therefore be effective. Our approach explains the structure required to create valuable collective orientations, which is why we are presenting the framework, not the indispensable contents. Our approach goes from the immanent, deep levels of meaning-making to the superficial visible persuasive structures involved. Our logic is that meaning-making cannot happen unless this framework is present, and can be understood as a hierarchical process of meaning creation. Therefore, the partial presence of this framework is not sufficient for meaning-making to occur. Our approach has three distinct stages: firstly, understanding the concrete, qualitative logic of valuable orientations, and their formality. Secondly, using language's elemental structure and the transformative semiotization of these qualitative elements. Thirdly, using the Greimasian Actant model, which organizes the axiological immanent levels into a communicative form. Through these stages, we show how narratives can affect human sensibility. We show the link between qualitative concrete valuable collective orientations that appeal to our sensibility and the superficial communicative structures displayed in narratives.

Linguistic and ethology research shows us how to reach sensibility, and therefore effectively intervene in human beings' attitudes.

We are interested in knowing how, by using narratives and stories, collectives can follow valuable orientations. Our first consideration is that valuable orientations have to attain sensibility for intervention to be effective. Therefore, the motivation to act in a certain way depends on valuable projects, i.e. valuable orientations which reach our sensibility. When something reaches our sensibility it becomes almost an automatic reaction, as we do not really have to think about it as the obvious way to act and behave. We are constituted by it, so it is not something abstract but very concrete (and which has been developed in a collective setting). It is not through rational arguments that our sensibility is affected but by valuing qualitative entities, in the form of concrete sensorial elements that reach our sensibility. We can therefore establish the following conceptual chain. Valuable orientations need to reach our sensibility to become effective, and to reach our sensibility these valuable orientations have to

be presented to us in a qualitative manner reasoning. They need to be perceived by our senses, i.e. by our perceptors and they therefore need to be concrete. Only by being concrete and qualitative can they reach our sensibility. Thus, if these valuations are qualitative, they are made of concrete sensorial elements which possess a concrete logic.

Phonology, a branch of linguistics, allows us to understand the concrete logic of qualitative elements, as it shows us how concrete elements are able to reach our sensibilities. Phonology investigates how phonic, concrete, qualitative differences relate to meaning differences and how these differential elements are created and relate to one another. It tries to determine the communication systems that can be established through the phonetic substance, i.e. sounds. Therefore, phonology studies why and how concrete sound elements become meaningful. It studies how elements become valuable and are therefore able to reach sensibility. It classifies sounds depending on their function in language systems. Phonic elements have two types of functions: distinctive and demarcative. The distinctive function allows us to distinguish meanings between words and the demarcative function enables us to distinguish the minimal units of significance, the phonemes. These are systematized in every language by the principle of commutation, i.e. by trial and error, in that changing possible significative units and observing the changes in meaning is how distinctive units are found (Martinet, 1970). This distinctive function is possible through the contrast of phonic qualities.

There are a wide range of acoustic qualities, and as an example, we will use the sound quality differences that differentiate vowels and consonants. The sound quality of consonants in relation to vowels is that there is an obstacle that is overcome. Depending where this sound obstacle is situated, different types of consonant oppositions can be systemized; among others, these might be lateral, palatal or laryngeal. Thus, different sets of consonant series are created. In relation to vowels, the sound qualities defining the different oppositions among vowels would depend on the position of the speaker's tongue and lips, the degree of openness of their mouth and tongue and the use of nasal sounds. Each language has its own inventory of relevant phonemes, and pertinent phonic acoustic qualities. Therefore, it has been established by phonological studies that individual elements can become substantial and therefore meaningful through differences and contrasts. Though there are diverse theories in phonology about which features generate individuality through creating contrast, either by fully specified phonemes or ordering features in a hi-

erarchy of contrasts (Dresher, 2010), it is widely understood that this is the central hypothesis of phonology (Dresher, 2010). Although Chomsky and Halle's (1968) generative phonology emphasized the substantive aspect of phonological entities, in some way or other it ended up integrating this contrastive central hypothesis (Dresher, 2010), and currently in linguistics, the debate centres around whether these distinctive features are innate or created (Mielke, 2008). Either way, we know that sensibility is reached by the use of concrete qualitative differences, it is through contrasts and similarities that entities and meanings are created.

Consequently, phonology has demonstrated the formal logic by which qualitative elements and their relationships appeal to the senses, or in other words, to human sensibility. Therefore, we can transpose their findings to our qualitative requirement of how valuable projects can appeal to the senses, providing us with the most elemental understanding of how valuable orientations can reach human sensibility. We know that this contrasting feature is what gives meaning to what would otherwise be meaningless elements. In fact, information is created due to distinctiveness (Jakobson and Gunnar, 1965; Troubetzkoy, 1967; Martinet, 1970). This information is concrete: it defines entities and their relationships. Therefore, it is through the relationships created in a system how elements become valuable. Also, it is clear that an element in itself does not carry meaning. Therefore, a valuable project cannot be presented in itself, but it always has to be shown in a relationship. Therefore, linguistic categories have a concrete qualitative logic, and they do not relate to formal logic (Martinet, 1970).

Semantics follows the same concrete qualitative logic found in phonology. From the beginning of modern linguistics, Saussure (1966) defined language as a system of differences. Elements have value only in a relationship of opposition, and without this relationship they are non-existent. Significant units, signs, like a sheet of paper, have two faces, the significant and the signified. This definition is a mental one; the significant is an acoustic image of a concept (signified). Hjelmslev (1963) creates a new definition of sign, involving the content plane and the expression plane. Each of these planes has a form and a substance, thus it has a manifested side and an immanent side. Therefore, that which is concrete, qualitative, that which is semiotized can be said to be the substance, and the semiotization is the form (Corbí, 1983). Greimas (1971) establishes how this semiotization occurs and defines the elemental structure of language and the elemental structure of the transformation of qualitative concrete units.

Therefore, the relationship between the immanent universe and the manifestation universe is one based on a mutual presupposition. This elemental structure creates the semantic universe and illustrates the necessary elements by which meaning is possible.

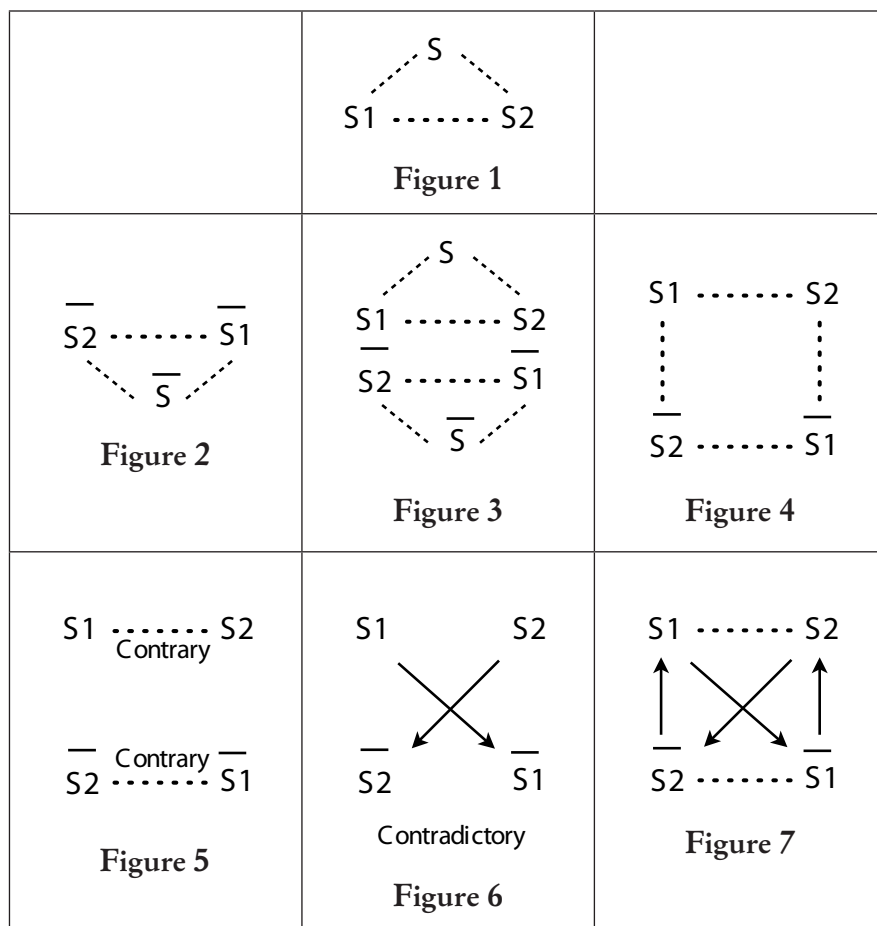
It is through our perception, therefore through concrete qualitative entities, that we value our world. Human beings perceive a discontinuity in their perception that favours the appearance of two elements which have similarities as well as differences (Greimas, 1966; Greimas, 1971). It is by perceiving their differences and similarities at least in two terms that we can substantiate these entities. Therefore, for this to materialize, a simultaneous relationship of conjunction (a similarity of elements) and disjunction (a contrast of elements) needs to occur in human perception for meaning at its most crude level to result. The conjunction axis can be understood as the common line that makes contrast possible. For example, in French, both “bas” and “pas” are bilabial, and have a conjunctive axis, whereas the fact that “b” is unvoiced and “p” is voiced is the contrastive feature (Dresher, 2010). Greimas defines the elemental semantic structure as $S1 \longleftrightarrow S2$. The similarities in $S1$ and $S2$ constitute the semantic axis “S”, the relationship. The relationship can be represented by the terms $S1$ and $S2$ which represent its differences; i.e., this is a contrary relationship. The semantic axis can therefore be understood as the canvas where differences are perceived and where meaning occurs. Meaning in its most basic level is possible when articulated through differences only when similarities are manifested. This defines the elemental structure of language, or can otherwise be defined as the deeper meaning generation structure (see figure 1). Here we can define how the relationship and its terms are constituted.

The world we live in is a world that becomes semiotic by the establishment of relationships based on contrast and similarity. That which is a valuable orientation appeals to our sensibility and it is a source for motivation and action. The next step is to understand the basic operations that permit the move from one valuable term to another term. This transformation logic is of key importance if we wish to intervene in human beings.

The most fundamental semantic structure (figure 1) needs to be complemented by a contradictory axis “No S” (\bar{S}) that signifies the meaningless axis (figure 2). These two contradictory axes, “S” and “NoS” \bar{S} (figure 3) structure the semantic square (figure 4) (Greimas, 1975). As we have seen, $S1$ and $S2$ are in a contrary relationship in both axes (figure

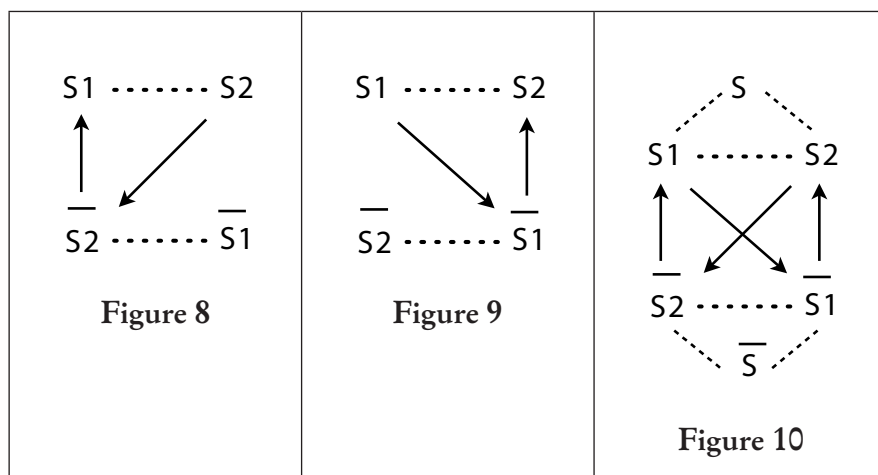
5), and by definition, $S2$ and $\bar{S}2$ are in a contradictory relationship, similarly to $S1$ and $\bar{S}1$ (figure 6).

The semantic square allows us to represent the fundamental transformation of the meaning generation process (figure 7). This process is oriented and fixed. There are two possible transformative operations that can occur and which show the transformation from one valuable option to the other. For example, let's imagine that we want collectivities to opt for valuable orientations defined as systems of values $S1$ (please note this means that collectivities are thought to be in $S2$). Following Greimas's logic, in order to help them to opt for $S1$, we need to negate $S2$ ($\bar{S}2$)



(figure 8). By negating $S2$ ($\bar{S}2$), we are implying $S1$. The same reasoning is involved in the opposite-oriented transformation. To move from system of values $S1$ to system $S2$ we need to negate $S1$ ($\bar{S}1$) (figure 9). Finally, figure 10 shows the complete transformation of the meaning generation process. Therefore, it is implied that to form adherence to a system of values, we have to negate the contradictory one. Transfers of valuable orientations are only achieved by negating contrary elements, that is, through contradictory relationships. It is only by this contradictory movement that systems of values can be perceived as valuable and meaningful to the senses, taking into account that this generative process occurs in relation to concrete, qualitative entities which are able to affect sensibility.

In summary, we have shown how sensibility can be reached only with concrete elements, and explained how sounds are individualized in a specific manner and how relationships are created. In doing so, we have described the formality of those elements, their constitution and their relationships. This concrete formality can be applied to any qualitative element that reaches sensibility; therefore, we can transpose these findings to the communication of valuable orientations. We have also presented the elemental structure of meaning and the elemental structure of the transformation of meaning that allow us to pass from one axiological option (the valuable option) to another one. We have therefore established how concrete units can affect sensibility and by doing so, intervene in human beings. This is the description of the most fundamental level of



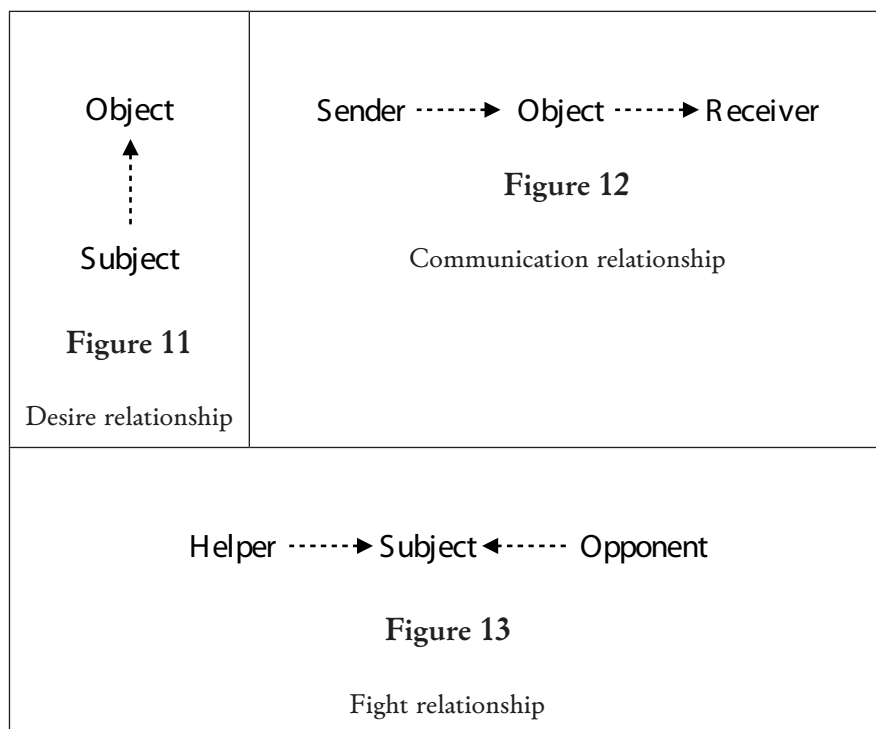
the semiotization of qualitative elements. Therefore if we want to intervene in collectivities we know that we need to do it through valuable options and for these valuable options to reach sensibility and be effective, the formality of qualitative concrete elements (i.e. the elemental structure of meaning and the transformation of elemental structure of meaning) must be followed. Now we have the elemental structure of meaning generation through which we can perform axiological transformations.

A more superficial but still fundamental level of deep narrativity structure is provided by the studies of Propp and Greimas. Propp (1971) showed that marvellous folktales had a common unvarying structure. His analysis was not focused on the plot of their narratives, but in discovering their underlying structure. He created the notion of function, which is able to explain the development of narrative action depending on the ordering, implications and exclusions of these functions. Inspired by this work, Greimas further simplified the fundamental structure of axiological narratives by showing that narrative action can be described as the opposition of two social orders, exemplified by a subject who is defending it and an anti-subject who is attacking it (Courtes, 1980). Therefore, any axiological narrative will include two valuable projects in opposition. Greimas developed a conceptual model, the actant model, which can explain the different types of micronarrative universes and is therefore able to describe and organize the semantic universe, and specially the axiological construction. Different actant models have been described for different types of narrative structures.

The actant model is formed by two types of semantic units, discrete and integrated units. Discrete units, the actants, have the quality of substance, which can take the form of an actor, symbol, thing, image, or animal, among other possibilities. Thus, actants are defined as types of actors, in the broad sense. Actants are determined from the outset and represent spheres of functions, axiological content and possible processes and developments of a narrative (Greimas, 1971). Each of the actants has "invested" (represents) some of the semes (valuable meanings) of the social orders in conflict. Actants are not actors, and one actor can adopt different actant structures. Actors are present only at the discursive level of the narrative. Integrated semantic units are the predicates, giving information about the actants. Discrete and integrated semantic units are combined to form a message. Therefore, actants have a double conceptualization, as semic content defined by the predicates in each microsemantic universe, and as a subclass, in which they are prior to the predicates

because the discursive activity involves attributing properties to the actants (Corbi, 1983).

There are only three possible combinations of actants: subject-object, sender-receiver, and helper-opponent. Each of these pairs forms a category that operates in a specific manner (Greimas, 1971). These combinations, depending on the semantic axis of actions, can also be described as relationships: desire (or search), communication, and test (or fight) (Barthes et al., 1970). The subject-object actantial category is the principal pair of the actant model. The subject represents a structure of preferred orientation, of desires towards a coveted object that represents the orienting value (figure 11). The sender-receiver category represents that which attributes good (object) and that which receives that good (object) (figure 12). A third category is formed by, on the one hand, those elements that act helping the consecution of the subject's wish and on the other hand, those that oppose it (figure 13). This last category is described as auxiliary participants in the narrative. The way actants are distributed in the



narrative structure, and the relationships of the actants with the actors defines the different types of actantial models. For example, there are often syncretism between the actants, such as in love stories where the subject is also the receiver. Also, there might be a subordination and/or absence of actants (Greimas, 1971). As an example, figure 14 shows the actantial model of the myth structure.

We have restricted the present descriptions to the main characteristics of the actant model. Through his theory of modalization, Greimas develops the actant model as a process (Greimas, 1971). He describes how deep, profound structures become realized in syntagmatic manifestations and shows the possible changes that actants can suffer. The subject is defined in its relationship to the object and this empty structure is defined by passing through different discursive sequences. There are successive transformations that the subject develops before “doing” (getting the desired object); this occurs before adhering to the desired system of values. Syntagmatic structures will show the processes of “wanting to do”, “knowing how to” and “being able to”. Therefore, the semiotic existence of the subject “of doing” goes through three narrative states. The first of these is virtuality, in which the subject has not yet achieved the required competences to achieve the object. The second is actualization, where the subject has achieved the competences to reach the object. The final one is realization, where the subject has attained the object of value. The final specification of the actant model will depend on the valuable contrary options that are in dispute. Therefore its specification will be quite particular and could be developed in another article by focusing on an individual illustrative intervention.

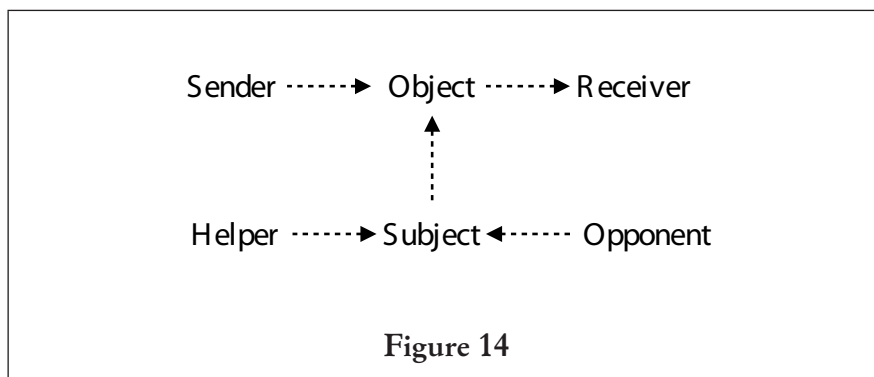


Figure 14

CONCLUSION

We have clarified where the motivational aspect of narratives lies, explained how persuasive narratives can be created and therefore how meaning-making is operationalized, and brought linguistics and ethology research into the realm of management theory, and in doing so, allowed for effective management intervention through persuasion, and for expansion of the valuable contributions of linguistics and ethology into management. We have also aimed to ground the efforts of narrative research into organizational intervention on strong foundations. Our anthropological assumptions of human beings from linguistics and ethology research allow for an effective operationalization of the meaning-making framework into three distinct parts. The first is understanding the concrete, qualitative logic of valuable orientations, and their formality. Only by working with concrete entities can human sensibility be reached and an intervention be effective. Second, we have showed how to create meaning at its most elemental level and how the transformation of meaningful concrete valorative elements takes place. Third, we have shown how the Greimasian Actant model organizes these two axiological immanent levels into a more superficial communicative form.

However, it should be stressed that we have only presented the framework of the hierarchical structure of meaning-making. These structures are conceptualized at the paradigmatic level of language. There is a further layer of semantic generation produced at the syntagmatic level of language. This is the most superficial layer and deals with the figurative and thematic elements of the narrative (Greimas, 1983). Therefore, we have shown the semantic immanent universe of narratives, and a last step would be the manifestation of this universe in narrative form; this is done in the discursive display. This discursive manifestation is what is referred to in the normative advice about the use of narratives in management (Vincent, 2002; Lambert, 2002; Denning, 2004; Hatakenaka, 2004; Brown, 2005; Denning, 2005; Gargiulo, 2005; Gargiulo, 2007; Brill, 2008; Norrick, 2010; Fog, 2010; Parkinson, 2009; Quesenbery, 2010; Spaulding, 2011).

Although we have defined the meaning-making structure that needs to be maintained so that meaning-making is possible, the most superficial levels of specific actant structure and the thematic elements of the argumentative narrative have not been developed, because the development of these elements will depend on the valuable contextual projects in conflict. We have focused on the immanent structure of meaning-making

because, unfortunately, it is often taken for granted and overlooked, therefore rendering meaning-making interventions at the superficial narrative level ineffective. We have not focused on the discursive level of language because our desire was to highlight and properly value the importance of the immanent structure of any axiological narrative, and has been said, this would be dependent on a justified argumentation of the valuable projects which are in dispute.

The most common normative advice in management is the use of stories with morals. It is thought that by telling moralizing stories, or even by discussing narratives' morals, an effect on individuals can be achieved, and intervention will therefore be effective. As we have seen, in order to change valuable orientations, managers need to understand which are the semic qualities of the orders in conflict, in order to grasp which are the valuable projects that need to be argumentatively narrated. Moralizing stories without considering the underlying systems of values will only work if the immanent structure is congruent with the manifested structure; otherwise, these moralizing stories are fruitless. This explains why it could be the case that similar persuasive narratives might work in some instances and in others they might be ineffective, because the hierarchical relationship congruence is either fulfilled or not.

Often, when values are specifically discussed, they take the form of abstract conceptual structures with no impact on sensibility, as in Denning (2005), Quesenbery (2010) and Spaulding (2011). Talking about and discussing values without taking into consideration the formal qualitative structure of values to reach sensibility, render such conversations well intentioned but nevertheless sterile. Following our operationalization of meaning-making, there is a correct way to argue about valuable options and a non-effective way to do the same thing. Normative advice is often given about how to transmit informative messages of what is expected and as way of making sense of reality (Adorisio, 2009; Brill 2008). Also, the positive collateral effects of delivering information in a more engaging manner, as set out in Gargiulo (2005, 2007), Brown (2005) and Quesenbery (2010), are defended. However, the fact that information is structured in a more engaging manner at the superficial level of narrative structure does not imply that valuable projects will be transformed and/or that the intervention will be effective. Also, some authors, such as Fog (2010), focus on plot development without realizing that this is only a superficial structure and that axiological changes are produced at the immanent structure level and manifested at the superficial level.

Therefore, it would also be an error to use the Greimasian actant model without considering the fundamental and profound structure of qualitative formality, and the semic structures that need to be invested in the actants for the axiological transformation to occur, as we have seen. If these semic value considerations are not taken into account then the actant structure has not been properly specified, and will not achieve a transformation of individuals' valuable projects. Valuable projects need to be concrete qualitative units, otherwise they cannot reach our sensibility, and as this study has shown, these qualitative units have a formality. Any narrative aiming to intervene in collectives' attitudes needs to take into consideration the concrete formality of valuable options. These structures are all present at the immanent level of language, and therefore any manifestation of language aiming to change valuable orientations needs to relate to this immanent structure.

Finally, we have established that intervening in collectivities to transform their adherence to valuable projects is possible only if their sensibility can be reached. Reaching sensibility has a unique formality: the logic of qualitative elements establishes that units become meaningful, and are therefore able to affect sensibility, through contrasts and similarities. Having detailed this, we proceeded to explore how best to design the elemental structure of language and the elemental structure of language transformation, to produce the semiotization of qualitative elements. This semiotization has two oriented transformative possibilities, and it can be applied to valuable orientations, as these need to appeal to sensibility. We explained how to transform collective value orientations from one valuable set of entities to another. Next, we described how meanings are organized and structured through the actant model. These linguistic theories are at the deepest fundamental level; it is at the syntagmatic level that discursive anthropomorphic structures enter into play. Any narrative has an immanent and a manifest structure. It is only by connecting the display, the manifest structure, with the fundamental structure of narratives that we can effectively create powerful narratives, thereby potentially achieving a transformative effect. Consequently, we have shown how to use persuasive argumentation to intervene in collectivities and in doing so have proved how treating the underlying value structures in conflict are key to any successful narrative. Without considering this immanent level of meaning making, the potency of narratives is impoverished, and thus rendered sterile or even counterproductive.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorisio, A.L.M. (2009) *Storytelling in organizations: from theory to empirical research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Amabile, T. M. (1997). Motivating creativity in organizations: On doing what you love and loving what you do. *California Management Review*, 40 (1), pp. 39-58.
- Bage, G. (1999) *Narrative matters: teaching and learning history through story*. London: Falmer Press.
- Barnard, C. I. (1938) *The functions of the executive*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Boje, D.M. (2001) *Narrative methods for organizational and communication research*. London: SAGE.
- Boje, D.M. (2006) Book Review Essay: Pitfalls in Storytelling Advice and Praxis. *Academy of Management Review*, 31 (1), pp. 218-25.
- Brill, F.S. (2008) *Leading and Learning- Effective School Leadership Through Reflective Storytelling and Inquiry*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Briody, E., Tracy Meerwarth, P. and Trotter, R. (2012) A story's impact on organizational-culture change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25 (1), pp. 67-87.
- Brown, J.S. (2005) *Storytelling in organizations: why storytelling is transforming 21st century organizations and management*. Boston: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Brunninge, O. (2009) Using history in organizations. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 22 (1), pp. 8-26.
- Cajete, G., Eder, D. and Holyan, R. (2010) *Life lessons through storytelling: children's exploration of ethics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Can-Seng, O. (2002) Persuasive histories: Decentering, recentring and the emotional crafting of the past. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 15 (6), pp. 606-21.
- Chomsky, N. and Halle, M. (1968) *The sound pattern of English*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, N. (2000) *New horizons in the study of language and mind*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Corbí, M. (1983) *Análisis epistemológico de las configuraciones axiológicas humanas. La necesaria relatividad cultural de los sistemas*

- de valores humanos: mitologías, ideologías, ontologías y formaciones religiosas*. Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca.
- Courtes, J. (1980) *Introducción a La Semiótica Narrativa y Discursiva. Metodología y Aplicación*. Argentina: Hachette.
- Czarniawska, B. (1998) *Narrative approach in organization studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Czarniawska, B. (2004) *Narratives in social science research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Davies, A. (2007) *Storytelling in the classroom enhancing oral and traditional skills for teachers*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Davies, M.M. (2004) *Dear BBC: children, television storytelling, and the public sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- de Saussure, F., Bally, C., Sechehay, A., Riedlinger, A. and Baskin, W. (1966) *Course in general linguistics*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.
- Denning, S. and Ganser, L.J. (2004) *Squirrel Inc: a fable of leadership through storytelling*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Denning, S. (2005) *The Leader's guide to storytelling*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Diefenbach, T. (2007) The managerialistic ideology of organisational change management. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 20 (1), pp. 126-44.
- Dresher, B.E. (2010) *The contrastive hierarchy in phonology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Fireman, G.D., McVay, T.E. and Flanagan, O.J. (2003) *Narrative and consciousness: literature, psychology, and the brain*. New York: Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Fog, K. (2010) *Storytelling branding in practice*. Berlin: Springer.
- Ford, J.D., Ford, L.W. and McNamara, R.T. (2002) Resistance and the background conversations of change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 15 (2), pp. 105-21.
- Fox Eades, J.M. (2006) *Classroom tales: using storytelling to build emotional, social and academic skills across the primary curriculum*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Freeman, J. (2007) *Once upon a time: using storytelling, creative drama, and reader's theater with children in grades preK-6*. Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, Westport.
- Gabriel, Y. (2004) *Myths, stories, and organizations: premodern narratives for our times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Gargiulo, T.L. (2005) *The strategic use of stories in organizational communication and learning*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharp.
- Gargiulo, T.L. (2007) *Once upon a time: using story-based activities to develop breakthrough communication skills*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.
- Geiger, D. and Schreyögg, G. (2012) Narratives in knowledge sharing: challenging validity. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 16 (1), pp. 97-113.
- Greimas, A.J. (1966) *Sémantique structurale*. Paris: Librairie Larousse.
- Greimas, A.J. (1971) *Semántica estructural. Investigación metodológica*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos.
- Greimas, A.J. (1975) *Sobre o sentido. Ensaio semióticos*. Petrópolis, Brasil: Editora Vozes.
- Greimas, A.J. (1983) *Du sens II. Essais Sémiotiques*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Hansen, K. (2009) *Tell me about yourself: storytelling to get jobs and propel your career*. Indianapolis, IN: JIST Works.
- Hatakenaka, S. (2004) *University-industry partnerships in MIT, Cambridge, and Tokyo. Storytelling across boundaries*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Hjelmslev, L. (1963) *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*. Madison, Milwaukee and London: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- IBM (2010) *Capitalising on complexity. Insights from the Global Chief Executive (CEO) Study*. IBM Institute for business value.
- Jabri, M., Adrian, A.D. and Boje, D. (2008) Reconsidering the role of conversations in change communication. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 21 (6), pp. 667-85.
- Jackson, S. and Esse, A. (2006) Making a difference through storytelling at Parcellforce. *Strategic Communication Management*, 10 (3), p. 26.
- Jakobson, R. and Gunnar, C. (1965), *Preliminaries to Speech Analysis*. Cambridge: The M.I.T Press.
- Kelman, H., and Warwick, D. (1978) The ethics of social intervention: Goals means and consequences. In Ott J.S. (ed.). *Classic readings in organizational behavior*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Lacher, D.B., Nichols, T. and May, J.C. (2005) *Connecting with kids through stories: using narratives to facilitate attachment in adopted children*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1979) *Myth and meaning*. New York: Schocken Books: Distributed by Pantheon Books.
- Lorenz, K. (1981) *The foundations of ethology*. New York: Springer-Verlag New York.
- Martinet, A. (1970) *La Linguistique Synchronique: Études et Recherches*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- McDrury, J. and Alterio, M. (2004) *Learning through storytelling in higher education*. London and Sterling, VA: Kogan Page.
- Mielke, J. (2008) *The emergence of distinctive features*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Morgan, G. (2006) *Images of organization*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Morris, D. (1967) *The naked ape: A zoologist's study of the human animal*. Canada: Bantam Books.
- Mouton, N., Sine Norholm, J. and Gabrielsen, J. (2012) Creating organizational cultures. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25 (2), pp. 315-31.
- Norrick, N.R. (2010) *Conversational narrative: storytelling in everyday talk*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Pub.
- Parkinson, R. (2009) *Transforming Tales*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Parkinson, R. (2011) *Storytelling and imagination: beyond basic literacy 8-14*. New York: Routledge.
- Podolny, J., Khurana, R., and Hill-Popper, M. (2005) Revisiting the meaning of leadership. In B. M.
- Pounsford, M. (2007) Using storytelling, conversation and coaching to engage. *Strategic Communication Management*, Apr/May(11,3).
- Propp, V. (1971) *Morfología del cuento*. Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos.
- Quesenbery, W. and Brooks, K. (2010) *Storytelling for user experience: crafting stories for better design*. Brooklyn, NY: Rosenfeld Media.
- Scheeres, H. and Rhodes, C. (2006) Between cultures: values, training and identity in a manufacturing firm. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 19 (2), pp. 223-36.
- Schein, E. (2009) *The corporate culture survival guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schilbrack, K. (2002) *Thinking through myths: philosophical perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Spaulding, A.E. (2011) *The art of storytelling: telling truths through telling stories*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc.

- Troubetzkoy, N.S. (1967) *Principes de Phonologie*. Paris: Editions Klincksieck.
- Vincent, L. (2002) *Legendary brands: unleashing the power of storytelling to create a winning marketing strategy*. Chicago: Dearborn Trade Pub.
- Zaro, J.J. and Salaberri, S. (1995) *Storytelling*. Oxford: Heinemann.